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ABSTRACT

This statewide evaluation of Even Start family literacy programs in Maine was conducted from November 1999 through September 2000. Six out of seven Even Start programs funded by the Maine State Department of Education for the 1999-2000 year participated in the study. All Maine Even Start programs offer a combination of home-based and center-based services for the families they serve. Questions that guided the evaluation were: What do Even Start programs look like in Maine? and What are the effects of participation in Even Start programs for families? This evaluation finds evidence that program implementation and development is successful across all six Even Start programs evaluated, with positive impacts for participating families. The evaluation report is divided into the following sections: Introduction (Even Start; Maine State Even Start Program); Program Evaluation (Evaluation Design; Sampling and Data Sources; Data Analysis and Quality; Evaluation Questions); Program Implementation (Population Served; Implementation and Service Delivery; Incorporating Equipped for the Future; Continuous Improvement; Collaboration; Life after Even Start; Barriers to Participation; Empowering Families as Co-Facilitators; Safe Learning Community; Summary); Evidence of Effects of Even Start Program Participation (Documenting Effects; Adult Literacy and Development Impacts; Child Literacy and Development Impacts; Parenting and Intergenerational Learning Impacts; Summary); and Conclusion (Program Implementation; Effects for Participants). Appendixes are: Maine State Even Start Participants; Maine State Even Start Programs; Evaluation Activities; Data Collection Instruments; and Evaluation Questions. (Contains a 7 references and 10 tables.) (NKA)

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Maine Statewide Even Start

Evaluation Report 1999-2000

Presented to the Maine State Department of Education
Augusta, Maine

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December 2000

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MAINE STATEWIDE EVEN START EVALUATION 1999-2000 Executive Summary

This statewide evaluation of Even Start family literacy programs in Maine was conducted from November 1999 through September 2000. The Maine State Department of Education funded seven Even Start family literacy programs for the 1999-2000 year. Six programs participated in this study; one eighth-year program declined participation. All Maine Even Start programs offer a combination of home-based and center-based services for the families they serve. Questions that guided this evaluation were:

- What do Even Start programs look like in the State of Maine?
- What are the effects of participation in Even Start programs for families?

This evaluation finds evidence that program implementation and development is successful across all six Even Start programs evaluated in Maine, with positive impacts for participating families.

Program implementation and service delivery - Program implementation and service delivery was found to be successful and responsive to the target audience of low-income and most-in-need families. Even Start programs in Maine are at different stages in their program cycles, from year one to year seven of implementation, and are providing activities appropriate to their programs' stage of development. For example, the first year program is focusing on recruitment, while the seventh year program is focusing on sustainability. All programs provided an intergenerational curriculum which integrates adult literacy, early childhood education, and parenting education. All six Maine Even Start programs are aware of the barriers to participation and successful program implementation, and are actively engaged in facing these challenges.

Incorporating Equipped for the Future (EFF) and continuous improvement - All six Even Start programs evaluated in Maine incorporate EFF standards and framework into their curricula. It is also evident that each Even Start program incorporates a continuous improvement approach to program planning and development. In addition to reflective and purposeful planning, Even Start programs in Maine engage in formative evaluation activities and support staff development. An active Even Start Maine Family Literacy Task Force, and regular training and development opportunities provided by the Maine State Department of Education and the Center for Adult Learning and Literacy, also contribute support for Even Start administrators and educators.

Collaborations - Successful and meaningful collaboration is a critical factor for the success of most of these Even Start programs. Even Start programs in Maine collaborate with a wide variety of agencies and businesses in their communities.

Participant satisfaction - There is very strong evidence of participant satisfaction with all six Even Start programs in Maine. These programs focus on empowering families. For example, at least three programs regularly incorporate participant designed and facilitated activities into their program. Two programs employ previous participants. The six Maine Even Start programs

provide safe learning environments for participants. Even Start participants describe the program as supportive, friendly, and safe.

Documenting effects for Even Start families - There is considerable evidence that Even Start programs in Maine are having positive effects for participating families. Extensive documentation of program activities and participant development is compiled at each site. Documentation focuses more on adult impacts and program activities than on intergenerational learning and child development. Programs should implement more standardized and pre-post testing of adults and children. Working more closely with school staff and using childhood developmental measures are some ways of further documenting impacts for families.

Positive adult literacy and development effects - The adult education and literacy componant of all the Even Start programs in Maine includes opportunities for life skills, parenting skills, and academic development. However, many personal and social issues became barriers for participants to successfully attain education and career goals. Most (76%) adults surveyed report that they are learning things they think are important. Fifty-one percent report improved reading and writing skills, and 37% report improved math skills as a result of Even Start program participation.

In addition to skills development, there is evidence that Even Start program participants in Maine improved their mental and emotional health, and social skills. Thirty-one percent of survey respondents indicate that program participation has helped them with stress management. Seventy percent report they have made new friends, and 70% feel better about themselves since participation in Even Start. Survey respondents report increased communication skills, and increased sense of empowerment and self-esteem. Nearly all (80%) of the respondents indicated that they have access to information and resources that they did not have before participating in their Even Start program.

Positive early childhood development impacts - There is evidence, primarily anecdotal, of impacts on child literacy and development for Even Start program particiants. Seventy-six percent of survey respondents report that their children have learned new things since participating in Even Start, 44% report that their children are getting along better with other children, and 34% believe their children are more prepared for school. One program analyzed school data and found that their Even Start children were performing at or above satisfactory levels in their elementary school. More data of this sort should be collected by Even Start programs in Maine.

Positive parenting skills impacts - There is evidence, again primarily anectotal, that Even Start participation has a positive effect on parenting skills. Eighty percent of survey respondents indicate that they are more comfortable visiting their childrens school, 57% are more involved in their child's education, and 43% more aware of seeing parents as teachers. As with child development impacts, it is advised that Even Start programs in Maine collect more concrete data regarding parenting and intergenerational literacy impacts. Writing case studies is one way to do this. Another way would be to collect information from other agencies (Head Start, schools, ASPIRE, WIC, for example) who work with these families to learn how other professionals may see change in parenting skills as a result of Even Start participation.

This evaluation was funded by the Maine State Department of Education with support from the College of Education and Human Development, University of Southern Maine. The principal investigator would like to acknowledge the assistance of Lisa Levinson, Veronica Delcourt-

Branch, and the administrators and educators in Maine's Even Start family literacy programs for their contributions to this study. Communication regarding this report should be directed to:

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INTRODUCTION

This evaluation report of Maine's Even Start programs provides an overview of evaluation activities and findings undertaken during the period of November 1999 through September 2000. This study was done in conjunction with the local evaluation of six Even Start programs in Maine, which are described below.

EVEN START

Even Start is an intergenerational educational program that aims to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving educational opportunities of low-income and most-in-need families. Even Start is federally funded and state administered. All programs in Maine share the common goal of addressing learning needs of the whole family using an integrated educational model, which includes early childhood education, adult literacy, and parenting education. Muriel [a pseudonym], an Even Start mother of three puts it this way: "Even Start is like a dream come true, coming into my home, learning, children are here learning right along with me. They respect my non-traditional values and schooling. They've met me where I am." Note that, in this report, names of all Even Start participants, staff, and other key informants have been changed for reasons of confidentiality.

EVEN START PROGRAMS IN MAINE

The Maine State Department of Education funded seven Even Start programs for the 1999-2000 year. Six programs participated in this study; one eighth-year program declined participation. All Maine Even Start programs offer a combination of home-based and center-based services for the families they serve. Maine State Even Start programs seek to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy for participants by:

- Focusing on best practices in adult education, child education , and parenting education, using benchmarks described in "Equipped for the Future" and other research publications,
- Offering home visits which include comprehensive parent education and supports which are integrated within an overall family setting involving parents and children, including monthly family meetings and activities,
- Providing opportunities for support groups,
- Making referrals to appropriate agencies and community resources,
- Using an inter-agency team approach, and
- Building on family strengths as families go through a self-assessment and goal setting process.

Table 1 provides an overview of the six Even Start programs included in this study and their year of operation during the 1999-2000 evaluation cycle. Appendix A includes a more detailed overview of the six Maine Even Start programs studied.

Table 1
Programs and Year of Operation

Program	*Year of Operation*
Dover-Foxcroft Even Start Program	1
Even Start Links, Farmington	2
Belfast Encouraging Literacy in the Family (ELF) Program	5
Portland West Even Start	5
Center and Home-based Instructional Program for Parents and Youth (CHIPPY) Even Start, Fort Kent	6
Families Growing Together Downeast, East Sullivan	7

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The primary goal of this evaluation was to provide information on program successes and challenges to the Maine State Department of Education. In addition, this evaluation provides information to the programs to help them reflect on what is working well and where some changes might be warranted.

EVALUATION DESIGN

This evaluation was conducted using a participatory action evaluation approach, responsive to program-related concerns and issues of members of the community being evaluated (Cousins & Earl, 1993; Patton, 1990; Stake, 1993). Such responsiveness is attained primarily by involving in the decision making process those who are concerned with the participants' progress. A participatory approach is highly consonant with Even Start's underlying empowerment philosophy. Administrators and educators at each of the six sites contributed to the development of the evaluation questions.

A participatory and responsive design highlights the unique experiences of participating adult learners and their families, including strengths and challenges they bring to the program, the critical contextual factors that facilitate and block families' educational empowerment and employment, and the ways in which program components meaningfully and effectively address learner needs. From data collected, common themes were sought toward an enhanced understanding of the Even Start family literacy programs in Maine. Appendix B includes vignettes and testimonials from Even Start participants.

Methodologically, this evaluation involved a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure a comprehensive assessment. It used multiple measures including instruments designed for specific use in this evaluation. At each of the six sites, the evaluator reviewed program records maintained by program staff, and conducted interviews with key stakeholders and program participants. Primary data sources included program staff, learners, collaborators, and program documents. Evaluation activities are presented in Appendix C. Data collection instruments are presented in Appendix D.

SAMPLING AND DATA SOURCES

The goal of this evaluation was to gather data from all sources closely involved with and/or affected by participation with Even Start. The sample for this study included six Even Start programs in the state of Maine. Data were collected from active participants, key informants, program educators and administrators and program documents. Table 2 provides an overview of data sources from each of the six sites.

Table 2
Data Sources for the Study

Program	*Participants Surveyed*	*Participants Interviewed*	*Program Staff Interviewed*	*Collaborators Interviewed or Surveyed*	*Site Visits*
Dover-Foxcroft Even Start Program	11	2	4	1	2
Even Start Links, Farmington	15	2	3	0	2
Belfast ELF Program*	11	2	4	0	2
Portland West Even Start	13	4	4	7	4
CHIPPY Even Start, Fort Kent	23	0	4	0	1
Families Growing Together Downeast, East Sullivan*	10	0	4	1	2
Total	***83***	***10***	***23***	***9***	***13***

*Part-time administrative assistants were interviewed at these sites

DATA ANALYSIS AND QUALITY

Data were gathered from a variety of sources to inform this evaluation. Most of it was qualitative, in the form of interviews and review of program documents. Given the nature of this evaluation (responsive, participatory, and heavily reliant on qualitative data), constructivist criteria for judging data quality are appropriate. Nationally recognized evaluators Guba and Lincoln propose that: ". . . the determination of credibility can be accomplished only by taking data and interpretations to the sources from which they were drawn and asking directly whether they believe -- find plausible -- the results. This process of going to the sources -- often called 'member checks' -- is the backbone of satisfying truth-value criterion" (1989, p. 110). Techniques engaged to promote credibility of data and data analysis include member checks and peer debriefing (after Guba and Lincoln 1989, pp. 236-239).

Quantitative data were gathered from 83 surveys, which were completed by program participants across the state. Program participation fluctuates somewhat, but during the 1999-2000 year, 73-113 families were participating at any one time. Using an average of 93 families, 89% of families in Maine's Even Start participants are represented by the survey. Quantitative data were entered into Minitab statistical software and descriptive summary statistics were calculated for discrete variables. In addition, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted on variables and sites to look for differences in means for responses from site to site. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r) values were examined for variables that showed a significant difference on the ANOVA tests. Two nearly identical surveys were distributed. The second version had 14 additional items, primarily relating to community participation and self-esteem. Therefore, most findings show an n of 83, but for some of the items there are 59 responses.

It is important to note with these survey responses that respondents could select as many categories as they wished, meaning that some respondents may have picked many categories, while others just one or two. Also, Even Start programs place a great deal of importance on learner-directed programming. Therefore, there are a number of ways to interpret some of these findings. For example, 51% of the survey respondents indicated that since joining Even Start, they have improved reading/writing skills. This percentage may indicate that this 51% had a learning goal of improving their reading/writing skills and followed through on their personal learning goal. On the other hand, the 49% who did not respond may feel that they do not need to improve their skills, or that they did not make progress. Either way, these findings present a picture of how participants perceive the Even Start program to be impacting their lives. The aim of this survey was to give the learners in Even Start programs in Maine some voice in how they see the program and its effects on their lives and the lives of their families.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Evaluation questions for this study were:

- How are Even Start programs implemented in the State of Maine?
- What are the effects of participation in Even Start programs for families?

Local program evaluation questions were developed in a participatory manner at an initial evaluation meeting at each site in November 1999 and were further refined over the following months. Evaluation questions for all Even Start programs are found in Appendix E. Evaluation questions fall into two categories: programmatic questions and questions regarding impacts for

families. Table 3 shows the distribution of types of evaluation questions across the six Even Start programs included in this study.

Table 3
Types of Evaluations Questions Asked by Even Start Programs in Maine

	Dover- Foxcroft Even Start Program (yr 1)	Even Start Links, Farmington (yr 2)	Belfast ELF Program (yr 5)	Portland West Even Start (yr 5)	CHIPPY Even Start, Fort Kent (yr 6)	Families Growing Together Downeast, East Sullivan (yr 7)
How is EFF being implemented in our program?			X		X	
What do our collaborations look like? (Description and impacts)		X		X	X	
Program development issues (transitions, record keeping, life after Even Start)			X			X
Program Implementation (recruitment, staff development)	X					
How does this program support empowerment and self-sufficiency?					X	X
Program Participants (description, impact of participation, showing progress for learners)	X	X	X	X	X	X

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned in the introduction of this report, each of the six Even Start programs evaluated is at a different place in their program cycle. Although this influenced some of the evaluation questions that the program staff posed, all evaluation questions fell into two main themes: 1) program implementation and development, and 2) impacts of participation for families. All Even Start programs in Maine asked evaluation questions related to program implementation and development regardless of how many years the program had been in operation. This section of the report presents findings that respond to program implementation and development questions. Themes include:

- Population Served,
- Implementation and Service Delivery,
- Incorporating Equipped for the Future (EFF),
- Continuous Improvement,
- Collaborations,
- Life After Even Start, and
- Barriers to Participation and Program Implementation.

POPULATION SERVED

Successful program implementation and development depends on understanding clientele served. All Even Start programs that participated in this study wanted this evaluation to help them better understand program participants. Toward this end, a description of participants was explored in this study. Data were collected to better understand the families participating in Maine's Even Start programs from participant surveys, participants' portfolios, review of program documents, interviews with participants, and interviews with staff.

It is important to note that most Even Start program participants in Maine have many barriers to successful participation in the program, which in turn affects the degree of impact. Data collected through interviews and from document reviews indicate that family, health, and legal situations are often overwhelming for participants and get in the way of their active participation in Even Start. One Even Start educator recorded these concerns about two families she works with:

> Linda is going through a divorce that includes a custody battle. Understandably, this is all involving. Right now she can deal with little else in addition to caring for her five children. . . This was a complicated month for Mike and Jeannie. They moved, had disrupted phone service for awhile, Mike's mother passed away and Jeannie found out that she's pregnant while battling the flu. - *Excerpts from Monthly Progress Notes*

There are many other examples of barriers to participation for families, including employment, transportation, substance abuse, and frequently moving. Educators report that the families that they work with need considerable support and time.
Even Start programs focused recruitment efforts on most-in-need families in their districts. Staff across the state noted a number of challenges these families faced to program participation,

including: anger at "the system", lack of trust, external locus of control, lack of discipline and motivation, low self-esteem, substance abuse issues, domestic violence, unreliable or lacking transportation, and uncooperative partners. One of the Even Start educators gave this example of a participant who is facing many of these barriers, including an uncooperative partner and lack of trust:

> "One of the parents is having a problem with a controlling boyfriend and his jealousy. I recommended that she call [a support agency]. Well, they phoned back while they boyfriend was there. He checks the caller identification. So now she's lost complete trust with that agency. We are dealing with that kind of barrier." – *Jill, Even Start Educator*

Many Even Start participants have infants. Some participants have no telephones. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that they did not own or have access to an automobile. Program staff report that most participants receive some sort of state assistance. A few participant families have children who are in state custody at this time. According to results of the Test of Adult Basic Education given at one of the Even Start sites, most program adults are at the 5th to 6th grade levels. Clearly, Even Start programs in Maine are working with their intended audience: low-income, at-risk, low-literacy level families. In addition, participants interviewed describe themselves as having low self-esteem and aspirations, and feeling isolated from resources and their communities before participation with Even Start.

Mary, an Even Start educator, considers lack of education, mental illness, substance abuse, other types of addictions, lack of an equal and supportive partner, having too many children at too young an age, physical abuse, and legal problems as common barriers to success among Even Start participants. "The list could go on, but those are the sorts of things I realize are common issues we run up against when we are trying to do family literacy with this high risk group," said Mary. Jill, another Even Start educator, recounts:

> "One woman I'm working with now, last year she started and she didn't even make one appointment. We dropped her because it was obvious she wasn't ready to make that kind of commitment. We picked her back up again [a year later] and she's made enormous gains. She has been very consistent, has increased skills tremendously, is involved with her kid's education for the first time ever, and has had stable housing for a year. This is a 21-year-old with a 6-year-old son and a 9-month-old son. She's very motivated now to make changes. A year ago she was in a different place. I think it was because we were consistent and persistent with her. We do always try to leave the door open and say, maybe you're not ready now, but when you are, we'll be there for you. We check back. We work with most-at-risk families, but it's a hard thing to do. It's hard for them to make appointments and follow through. [Issues like] substance abuse and domestic violence interfere. It's hard to keep an appointment because they've got all of these issues to deal with. I worked with a family last year, there was major domestic violence and all the children were taken away. We even worked in the shelter. There were just too many issues. Well, how can you go into a home like that and say 'what are you reading' when she's getting beaten up? You need to deal with the hierarchy of needs before you deal with 'what about your education.'"

IMPLEMENTATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Data to answer evaluation questions regarding implementation and recruitment were collected through interviews with Even Start staff and review of program documents including program portfolios. One program in this study was in its first year of operation, and the staff primarily focused on working on program development and recruiting participants. Recruitment methods included putting advertisements in newspapers, distributing flyers and posters, meeting with community agencies, house-to-house recruitment, and networking in local businesses. Even Start programs also reported receiving referrals from a number of community agencies including Head Start, Women Care, Teen Parenting Programs, Welfare to Work, Adult Education, and the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program.

Even Start programs in Maine have kept a thorough record of program implementation and development in their program portfolios. These programs provide a wide array of integrated services, as well as help make connections with other agencies to promote education and development for participating families. Center-based programs and activities implemented by Even Start programs in Maine included:

- Monthly family events,
- Life skills education,
- Literacy tutoring,
- Toddler play group,
- Teen parent and other support groups,
- Access to GED, adult basic education, computer and parenting classes,
- Early childhood classroom activities,
- Field trips, including ferry trips and museum visits,
- The New Books New Readers program, and
- The Parents as Teachers program.

Home-based activities provide one-on-one contact and support from educators and combined adult literacy, parenting education, and early childhood activities including:

- Sensory stimulation and language development for children,
- Reading activities for the whole family,
- Tutoring for the adults, and
- Gross motor activities for the parent and child together.

Activities and services were found to be integrated, diverse, and responsive to family needs at each of the Even Start programs in Maine.

INCORPORATING EQUIPPED FOR THE FUTURE

All Even Start programs in Maine focus on developing skills, attitudes, and functioning for their families using the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) Equipped for the Future (EFF) framework. One program director put it this way:

> "[Our Even Start program] enhances family focus on skills by using each of the generative skills. Our teachers meet each week for two-and-a-half hours of common planning time. They identify one of the generative

skills and then they develop complementary lesson plans for the following week for both parents and children to work on. The plans are built on the skills that parents and children are working on, at their individual levels. Parents and children have the opportunity to spend time together during thirty minutes of parent/child together time each day. We try to express to parents and help them discover and appreciate the importance of modeling for their children in the areas of values, education, decision making, and community involvement. Essentially, we want parents to be the most important teachers in their children's lives. I think that our emphasis on parent/child together time and on family activity-based literacy experience gives parents, children, and families ample opportunities to learn to function as a cohesive unit in a variety of social settings and recreational circumstances. – *Richard, Even Start Administrator*

This evaluation found considerable evidence that Even Start programs in Maine have incorporated EFF standards and frameworks into their program designs. For example, there was evidence of programs:

- Focusing on best practices in adult education, child education, and parenting education, such as those benchmarks described in the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL)'s Equipped for the Future framework and various research publications,
- Home visits being structured to include EFF standards in a holistic intergenerational context,
- Monthly family progress reports including EFF complimentary indicators of progress and success,
- Learners developing learning goals that are incorporated into their own larger learning context, following the EFF model,
- Staff development and training regarding EFF is encouraged and supported,
- Including EFF as a regular topic of weekly staff meetings,
- Offering comprehensive parent education and supports which are integrated within an overall family setting involving parents and children, and
- Building on family strengths as families go through a self-assessment and goal setting process.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Several of Maine's Even Start programs were experiencing changes and transitions while this evaluation was being conducted. This study found evidence of a continuous improvement approach to program planning and development in place at each of the Even Start programs in Maine. Even Start staff shared a number of examples of utilizing a continuous improvement approach to program implementation and development. For example, in one program, the staff felt that the parenting education part of their program could use improvement, although two of the staff are trained parenting educators. Rene, one of the teachers, did some research on parenting curricula and found the Parents as Teachers program. They implemented the program and are satisfied with how it is working. Another program was concerned about how program changes, such as staff turnover, have impacted program delivery and addressed this issue as part of a continuous improvement process.

As data were gathered and analyzed from document review of program records, interviews and observation, it was evident that these Even Start programs were focused on continuous improvement. Even Start administrators, in addition to incorporating a reflective approach to program planning, used a team-building approach to management; and staff have worked together during periods of change.

Many of the Even Start programs in Maine had evaluation questions that dealt with implementation and continuous improvement. An important aspect of program implementation for Dover-Foxcroft Even Start was staff development. Staff meet regularly and use part of their meeting time for staff development and to review staff goals. Program staff and administrators noted that an active Even Start Family Literacy Task force, together with regular training and development opportunities provided by the Maine State Department of Education family literacy coordinator and the Center for Adult Learning and Literacy (CALL) at the University of Maine, contributed to staff development.

Even Start staff are also aware of structural challenges they face to program development, for example physical space. In one program they were working on getting an office and perhaps classroom space in a new building. Another Even Start program was actively engaged in a self-evaluation project, examining what they have done in the past, what they are presently doing, and what they would do if they had more resources. Staff members in this Even Start program have also noted that Family Nights are sometimes well attended, while other nights have low attendance. The staff are working with program participants to plan Family Nights.

COLLABORATIONS

All programs were involved with a number of collaborators. Data were gathered regarding collaboration from interviews with program staff, review of program documents, and interviews or surveys of representatives from collaborating agencies. As one Even Start educator describes it: "We have flesh and blood collaborations . . . We have worked with community agencies, Child Protective Services, mental health agencies, and Department of Human Services. In this area, I feel that Even Start has raised the consciousness of the team regarding the families' position and how to work with families. They are seeing us as a resource now. In one case, DHS was able to see our work with a mom, who lost her child to DHS, as a strength."

Even Start programs in Maine work closely with a number of community organizations including Literacy Volunteers, the Adult Education Program, Head Start, local schools, the Department of Human Services, and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) programs. Findings indicate that Even Start program collaborations are strong and often seamless. For example, at one program, a Head Start grant allowed the collaborators to work on developing projects that looked at community needs assessment, designed a brochure that describes the different services, and coordinated a community conference on brain development research.

Even Start programs also collaborate with a number of local agencies to recruit participants. They also use Adult Education and Child Development Services (CDS) to conduct assessment tests for participant families. CDS conducted assessments to document children's motor skills and also conducted pre- and post-evaluations.

One Even Start administrator identifies two sorts of key collaborators: very intense and not as intense. Very intense collaborations are those that occur almost daily and include collaboration

with local adult education programs and public schools. Adult education programs provide services like testing and transcript review for Even Start programs. Even Start participants also take advantage of Adult Education course offerings. Less intense collaborations occur once or twice a week and include the Department of Human Services (DHS), PROP/Head Start, and Child Care Agencies and Pathfinder -- a job shadow program. A few of the programs report working extensively with their local elementary school:

> "We work with [the elementary school] a lot. They're one of our big collaborators. It's wonderful to have the partnership with [them]. We're very visible there. When there's a major crisis [with one of our families] we're there. We are involved in going to PETs and working with the teacher and social worker. We do weekly check-ins with [the school], acting as a liaison between home and school. We meet with the principal monthly to go through our families, do a check-in, and see how the kids are doing." – *Maura, Even Start Educator*

Even Start staff feel that these collaborations help participant families make progress toward their personal learning goals. According to Terry, one Even Start Director, "They help do our job. We're lost without them. They are like co-workers, they really are colleagues right now." When an Even Start participant is an open DHS case, the educators work closely with the DHS caseworker, "like a team working toward the same goal," according Mary, an Even Start educator.

Collaborators report a variety of benefits from their work with Even Start. Both adult education and elementary school respondents noted extra support for their clients as a result of collaboration with Even Start programs. Elementary school respondents listed a number of specific impacts of their collaboration with one of Maine's Even Start programs as:

- Extra support for children and families,
- Increase attendance for children of Even Start families,
- Positive school-wide events including intergenerational activities,
- Improved home-school connections and communication "The Even Start staff provide a highly valued link to parental communication" according to an elementary school administrator,
- Improved behavior programming due to home-school connection,
- Better access to supports from outside agencies,
- Connection with other community based resources,and
- Building relationships.

> "Building relationships is a crucial part of building collaboration. The outcomes [of our collaboration with Even Start] really benefit children and families." – *Representative of an Even Start collaborating agency*

One school administrator summarized the importance of Even Start program: "I hope that Even Start services are going to continue for a long time. The staff are of high quality. They are knowledgeable, cooperative, optimistic, and hardworking. We value their work with students, parents, and staff." One aspect of collaboration that Even Start programs need to continue to address is identifying program services to avoid duplication of services.

LIFE AFTER EVEN START

How do we prepare for life after Even Start funding ceases? This question was particularly pertinent to one Even Start program in its seventh year of operation. Data to answer this question were collected through interviews with program staff and program document review. Since this Even Start program is in its seventh year of operation, the staff are particularly concerned with how they will continue to provide services to families most-in-need in their area after Even Start funding discontinues. This issue is of particular concern to this Even Start program because it is primarily home-based, an approach which is effective with isolated, rural, most-in-need families, but resource intensive. During the 1999-2000 fiscal year, this Even Start program made progress toward preparing for life after Even Start by:

- addressing the issue at each weekly staff meeting;
- collaborating with area Head Start programs;
- collaborating with Maine Humanities Council to begin a New Books, New Readers program in Fall 2000;
- continued collaboration with the Adult Learning Center;
- continued collaborations with Child Development Services, Special Children's Friends, Child and Family Opportunities, Inc., and Parents Are Teachers, Too (PATT) of Hancock County;
- planning more center-based programming and expanding learning laboratories for year eight;
- planning an assessment process to monitor progress;
- planning collaboration with the local high school;
- publicizing program success; and
- increasing the percentage of monies for funding Even Start staff from other sources.

Clearly, this Even Start program has made a number of steps around planning for life after Even Start so that the families they now serve, and other most-in-need families in this area, can have access to services they need. As evidenced from program documents (primarily letters of agreement and meeting minutes), the program has worked closely with parents and agencies to develop plans for program continuation. This program has focused energy in the following areas: building collaborations and making programmatic changes from a home-based to a more site-based program.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Five of the six Maine Even Start programs included in this study are rural based programs. The barriers faced by program participants in these Even Start programs are typical of those faced by rural populations across the United States. They include lack of access to transportation and resources, and social isolation. Several of Maine's Even Start programs budgeted money to help provide transportation for families. Program staff also note that there can be resistance to bringing families together among the participants. The staff point out each other's strengths and "what the families can offer each other. The way we approach it is you can share your interests and strengths with others," according to Christine, an Even Start program administrator. A

recurring theme in the staff interviews regarding barriers to implementation was not having enough time when visiting participant's homes to completely transfer all of the information planned for that particular session. In spite of time constraints, staff believe participants are progressing toward their goals of developing parenting skills and are becoming more aware of their child's development.

Other program barriers include limited space, limited clerical help, and not enough work hours for both completing paperwork and working with participants. Along with problems obtaining adequate facilities, space, and equipment, staff note challenges in obtaining referrals from the school in one district and social agencies in another. One barrier to implementation that some staff noted was lack of a clear understanding of what Even Start and Family Literacy are among area agencies. Staff indicate that the Equipped for the Future (EFF) framework has helped them understand their own jobs better. "I've learned a lot, some really effective learning can happen for students through EFF," reports Jill, an Even Start educator.

PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION

One measure of program success is participant satisfaction. This is also an indicator of Even Start programs serving their targeted audience. Participants appear to be satisfied with services offered by Even Start, as indicated by these verbatim responses to the question "In your opinion, what are the best things about Even Start?"

Home-based Activities

- "They help work with the whole family. I am able to do my schooling at home. This program has made me realize that I'm a very strong person."
- "Even Start is like a dream come true, coming into my home, learning, children are here learning right along with me. They respect my non-traditional values and schooling. They've met me where I am."
- "I like the fact that my children have someone to learn about and play things with. Learning is fun for them."
- "Doing things with my child that I had thought of doing before. New teaching ideas for my child."

Support

- "How open and involved they [educators] are with all of our needs. No other program has been so helpful."
- "The teachers are very understanding and caring."
- "Even Start helps you with problems, helps you with children, helps you one-on-one if you need it."
- "Friendly opinions and conversation, and also the information given."
- "I have no favorite thing about Even Start. The whole program is just terrific. They are a very caring, patient, informative, and helpful group of people to help you in this world."
- "They care about you and your family needs."
- "Friendly people, and helpful."
- "My teacher has been very nice and helped me as much as she could."
- "The one-on-one assistance."
- "How understanding, and no matter what, they are always there for you."

- "Having something for support that is dependable and real."
- "The program helps you remember you are an important person even if only to yourself."

Access to Skills, Ideas, and Resources

- "The fact that I have the opportunity to improve my computer skills. I LOVE the PAT and parenting skills part of it as well.
- "They enable you to get hands-on information that you may not know how to get."
- "Help me communicate in the community more and read more."
- "Bringing resources into my life for me and my family"
- "Working on my GED. I enjoy working with the Even Start program!"
- "Help me communicate in the community more and read more."
- "I don't think there is any one thing that's the best the whole set up is very good for children and the parents as well."
- "Doing things with my child that I had not thought of doing before. New teaching ideas for my child."
- "The program is great! It helps mother and children understand and learn more."
- "I spend time with my children, I learn how to make things, meeting new people."

Participants were asked *what would improve Even Start*. Responses included:

- "I think Even Start is a wonderful program and maybe there is no room for improvement on perfection."
- "More family activities."
- "More clients."
- "More time."
- "More teachers, more funding."
- "More time with staff."
- "Be more available to a bigger part of the community."
- "If only there were more Even Starts around, to help more children."

EMPOWERING FAMILIES

Three Even Start programs were specifically interested in learning more about how they empower families toward self-sufficiency. Program staff at one Even Start site identified four areas of services that help families move toward empowerment: 1) educational programs, b) service referrals, 3) activities, and 4) mentoring. This evaluation found that many activities coordinated by Even Start staff appear to provide the opportunity to empower families toward self-sufficiency. In addition to specific activities, the program actively aims to promote a nurturing and safe learning environment, and a sense of community for participants. Findings regarding Even Start's program efficacy come from data collected through interviews with program staff, interviews with participants, the participant survey, program documents, and observation. Even Start programs in Maine incorporate a wide range of integrated, intergenerational activities, many of them participant designed and facilitated, to achieve their program goals. Staff promote age appropriate activities that nourish the mind, body, and sense of self. As one educator described it:

"The [Even Start] program strives to impact families in several positive ways by first

bringing adults and children together in a structured learning environment, both in a center-based and home-based atmosphere. The curriculum is designed around real world activities and seeks to promote the family's self-sufficiency by improving their roles as parents/family members, workers, and citizens." –*Kyle, Start Educator*

Some of these activities include:

- Parent Action Group (PAG) meetings which the opportunity for parents to organize and take responsibility for family activities, with focus on participants facilitating these activities,
- Parent and Children Together Time (PACT) activities,
- Inviting a state senator, local town manager, and state representative to speak with learners about upcoming elections and referendum issues,
- Mock elections so parents (many who were voting for the first time) had an understanding of the ballots before going to the polls, children also had a voting experience,
- Family activities each year based on interests of families and children,
- Integrating workplace readiness curriculum into the overall adult education program,
- Mentoring conducted formally and informally by Even Start educators and administrators,
- An Even Start parent was on the team for hiring a new staff member,
- Participant input into developing programming included resulted in 1) parent coffee hour, 2) focus on health issues affecting program involvement, 3) the structure of families nights, 4) organizing field trips, and 5) formative program evaluation, and
- At least three staff members at Even Start programs in Maine were formally program participants.

SAFE LEARNING COMMUNITY

Both staff and participants regularly noted the importance of building a safe learning community in Maine's Even Start programs. This appears to be a high priority for Even Start Links staff. Jill, one of the educators notes "participating families are beginning to see the value of meeting together." She recounts an instance during a Families for Peace meeting when the facilitator was distributing parenting videos and one of the participants said "Wouldn't it be nice if we could watch it together and have discussions?" This evaluation found evidence that Even Start staff help to foster a sense of trust and community among program participants. As one Even Start teacher explains: "[Our] Even Start program strives to provide a nurturing environment that emphasizes the growth and development of children and parents. The program is designed to build a sense of community among parents, children, and teachers." Another teacher described how Even Start participants contribute to a supportive learning environment:

> Students within our program encourage each other to achieve their academic goals and help build each other's self-esteem. We also provide the opportunity for former parents to stay connected with our current learns and to be comfortable with staff so they can return [to Even Start] if there is a need to seek support. – *Cheryl, Even Start Educator*

There is evidence that all of the Even Start programs in Maine foster a supportive and nurturing community from the perceptions of program participants:

> "This program is like having an extended family. All the people are very helpful. The

classes are informative."
"They are a good support system."
"The staff at [our Even Start program] are very helpful. If I'm in need of someone to talk to and for advice I know I am always able to speak to them."
"Staff help with problems and parenting skills."

SUMMARY

This evaluation finds evidence that program implementation and development is successful across all six Maine Even Start programs evaluated. Even Start programs successfully focus their recruitment efforts on most-in-need families in their districts. Program implementation and service delivery was found to be successful and responsive to participant families. Even Start programs in Maine are at different stages in their program cycles, from year one to year seven of implementation, and are providing activities appropriate to their program's stage of development. For example, the first year program is focusing on recruitment, while the seventh year program is focusing on sustainability.

> I think without Even Start I never would have got my GED. To tell the truth, I'd still be on state aid. I'd still be slackin'. Now I manage a variety store, I go to school, I'm on the Even Start Board. I've learned to be a better parent. Even Start gives families opportunities to spend quality time with kids. It's more than that, it has built relationships. I achieved more in one year in Even Start than I did in the last fifteen years – *Lily, Even Start parent*

All six Even Start programs in Maine incorporate EFF standards and framework into their curricula. It is evident that each Even Start program incorporates a continuous improvement approach to program planning and development. In addition to reflective and purposeful planning, Even Start programs in Maine engage in formative evaluation activities and support staff development. An active Even Start Family Literacy Task Force and regular training and development opportunities provided by the Maine State Department of Education and the Center for Adult Learning and Literacy also contribute support for Even Start administrators and educators.

Successful and meaningful collaboration is a critical factor for the success of Maine's Even Start programs. Even Start programs in Maine collaborate with a wide variety of agencies and businesses in their communities. Maine Even Start programs are aware of the barriers to participation and successful program implementation, and are actively engaged in facing these challenges.

There is very strong evidence of participant satisfaction with all six Even Start programs in Maine. These programs focus on empowering families. For example, at least three programs regularly incorporate participant designed and facilitated activities into their program. Two programs employ previous participants. The six Maine Even Start programs provide safe learning environments for participants. Even Start participants describe the program as supportive, friendly and safe. One participant said "This program is like having an extended family." Mary, an Even Start educator describes Even Start this way: "[Our Even Start program's] entire focus is on families reaching self-sufficiency as family members, community members, and workers. The program's curriculum is geared to enhance their overall parenting and academic skills, improving their attitudes toward obtaining viable employment, and their overall functioning as a productive family unit."

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTS OF EVEN START PARTICIPATION FOR FAMILIES

Each of the six Even Start programs that participated in this study was interested in effects of participation for families. This study collected data regarding: how each program documents effects of participation; impacts on adult literacy and development; impacts on child literacy and development; and impacts on parenting and intergenerational learning. Data were collected from program participants and staff, and review of program documents.

DOCUMENTING EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATION

Documenting effects of participation is very challenging for complex programs like Even Start. According to Kyle, one of the Even Start educators interviewed for this study:

> "I've seen very different progress for individual families. I think some families have just made enormous gains, and other families have made very little progress, and in some cases have even gone backwards. There are so many variables that effect the progress they can make. Sometimes, I feel like the impact we can make in a few hours is so phenomenal and at other times we can hardly make a dent." – *Kyle, Even Start Educator*

This study found that all Even Start programs keep extensive records of families and activities, as illustrated by Lisa:

> We document everything: meeting notes since day number one, Family Day Portfolios (complete with pictures, texts, handouts, etc), each month staff logs when meeting in homes, monthly reports, adult education records, etc. Everything reflects a continued effort to improve and meet needs as presented in any given span of time. For example, Mary, the coordinator, has found an increasing need to find more time to meet with participants to provide the assistance often needed to bridge difficulties which might prompt them to drop out. – *Lisa, Even Start Educator*

Clearly, documentation is a daunting task for these programs. The families they work with have individual goals and participate in a diverse range of activities. Some programs are more home-based while others are more center-based. In addition to individual programs being at different stages of implementation, families are also at different stages of participation:

> "We have kind of designated four stages [to describe] Even Start participation. We did it for our own use. At the first stage, someone is willing to sign on with Even Start, but unable to keep appointments. At the fourth stage you have someone who keeps appointments, calls us for extra appointments, is holding a job, furthering their education. We really do have a cross section of people at all four stages." – *Jill, Even Start Educator*

Since serving most-in-need families is a priority for Maine's Even Start programs, reporting progress with this clientele is challenging. Staff noted the progress with the families that they work with is evidenced in a myriad of ways. Besides keeping data for Even Start federal reporting purposes, Even Start programs in Maine also document progress using:

- learning logs which include documentation of increased initiation, follow through and attendance, as well as participation in program offerings such as Health Action Team, workshops, clinic presentation;
- copies of all of the work completed by parents and children;
- attendance records;
- observations of school teachers;
- data on enrollment in college preparation and college courses;
- daily documentation forms;
- data bases including MAEMIS, ESPIRS, and participant demographic data;
- a quarterly newsletter that publishes family accomplishments; and
- case studies of participating families.

Staff report that they would like to collaborate more closely with schools to monitor child development and progress. Documentation is complex, but seems to focus more on adults and activities than on intergenerational learning and child development, for the most part, across the state.

ADULT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Findings that address evaluation questions focusing on effects of participation for families are presented in this section of the report. The complexity of Even Start is highlighted by the highly individual and personal nature of the program. Measuring the impact of a complex intervention like Even Start includes looking beyond basic skills and knowledge attainment. Even Start programs asked questions like: What kinds of effects has this program had on the participating families?and Are families getting services they need to reach their goals?

The adult education component of the program provides education in life skills, vocational skills, and parenting skills. Programming for families is highly individualized to meet family goals. Evidence of adult literacy and development as a result of program participation is documented by the Even Start programs through interviews with participants, survey of participants, interviews with program staff, and program documents such as teacher logs, intake forms, notes from each contact, goal sheet, quarterly reports, and end of year questionnaires.

Findings presented here include impacts of Even Start program participation on knowledge and skills development; social, health and emotional development; access to information and resources; increased communication; and increased self-esteem for adult participants.

> "[Even Start] helped me to get back on my feet. And now I am doing much better in my life." – *Leanne, Even Start Parent*

Knowledge and Skills Development

As indicated in Table 4, many survey respondents believe that their involvement with Even Start has had an impact on their educational, literacy, and career development. As mentioned in the evaluation design section of this report, it is important to note with these survey responses that

respondents could select as many categories as they wished, meaning that some respondents may have picked many categories, while others just one or two. Also, Even Start programs place a great deal of import on learner-directed programming. Therefore, there are a number of ways to interpret some of these findings. For example, in Table 4, 51% of the survey respondents indicated that since joining Even Start, they have improved reading/writing skills. This percentage may indicate that these 51% had a learning goal of improving their reading and writing skills and followed through on their personal learning goal. On the other hand, the 49% who did not respond may feel that they do not need to improve their skills, or that they did not make progress. Either way, these findings present a picture of how participants perceive the Even Start program be impacting their lives. The aim of this survey was to give the learners in Even Start programs in Maine some voice in how they see the program and its effects on their lives and the lives of their families. Interviews with participants and program staff corroborate the findings presented here. Examples of what participants said about their learning in interviews and on open-ended survey items include:

"I always loved to write and Even Start encourages me to do more."
"I am reading better and learning not to be afraid to learn."
"I am learning new things each year that I come here."

Table 4
Survey Responses Regarding Adult Learning and Skills Development, n=83

Since joining Even Start I have . . .	*Percent*
Learned things that I think are important	76%
Improved reading/writing skills	51%
Developed career goals, n=59	47%
Attended adult education classes, n=59	44%
Improved math skills*	37%
Received help with job skills*	28%
Enrolled in a college course	16%
Received help findings a job	14%

Note that in Table 4, the variables "improved math skills" and "received help with job skills" as analyzed using a one-way ANOVA to test for differences between sites, are significantly different between sites. Individual site responses to this item are presented below. Percent of respondents who indicated gave a positive response ranged from 13% to 60% positive responses, to the item "Since joining Even Start, I have improved math skills" were:

Program A[1]	55%
Program B	60%
Program C	55%
Program D	23%
Program E	47%
Program F	13%

[1] No identifying characteristics are included when the programs are presented in this way (for example program name, number of respondents (n) and other identifiers) are not included because the intent of this evaluation was not to compare programs with each other, but to obtain a holistic view of Even Start in the state of Maine.

Both Program D and Program F had fewer positive responses to this item than the other four Even Start programs. ANOVA tests indicates that these differences are significant at a 90% confidence level (critical value=2.29, F=2.72, p=0.026). There is not a clear explanation for the differences in responses. Further research is warranted in this case. Positive responses to the item "Since joining Even Start, I have received help with job skills" ranged from 18% to 48%. ANOVA tests indicate these responses are significantly different (critical value=2.29, F=3.22, p=0.11). It is apparent with further analysis of the data that the lowest positive responses are correlated with newer programs. This may indicate that developing job skills takes longer time for these participants than other impacts, or it may be that a few of the sites do not emphasize job skills in the same way other programs do.

> "We encourage self-directed learning." - *Family Literacy Educator*

Social, Health, and Emotional Development

Table 5 shows that 22 to 31 percent of program participants perceive emotional benefits as a result of Even Start program participation. Table 6 indicates that, regarding social and health development, many participants feel that participation in Even Start programs has had a significant impact on their lives. Even Start program staff recognize that there are many barriers to learning for most-in-need families. They therefore value personal and social development and growth as necessary components to successful skill acquisition and more traditional educational and vocational learning.

Table 5
Survey Responses Regarding Emotional Issues, n=83

Even Start has helped me with . . .	*Percent*
Stress management	31%
Avoiding unhealthy relationships	27%
Depression/emotional issues	22%

Table 6
Survey Responses Regarding Social and Health Impacts of Program Participation, n=83

Since joining Even Start, I . . .	*Percent*
Have set goals for myself	77%
Have made new friends	70%
Feel better about myself	70%
Handle anger better than before*	33%
Get along better with others	30%
Exercise more	21%
Cut down or quit smoking	18%
Quit or cut down drinking	6%

In Table 6, it is evident that 70% of the respondents report that they have made new friends and 30% feel that they get along better with others. Most participants have set goals for themselves. Seventy percent of the survey respondents feel better about themselves as a result of Even Start program participation. ANOVA tests indicate that one of the items in Table 6 were responded to in significantly different ways across Even Start sites in Maine. The item "Since joining Even

Start, I handle myself better than before," had positive responses ranging from 18% to 69% (critical value=2.29, F=2.46, p=0.040). No correlating variables were identified (using Pearson's correlation). Even Start staff also felt that evidence of increased communication and social skills were key indicators of growth for most-in-need learners. Staff indicate that learners are growing in this area by:

- initiating conversations with Even Start staff by phoning;
- participant's tone of voice changes to being less defensive and flippant with staff and with their children; and
- increasingly regular participation with the program.

Increased communication and social skills were also measured by the survey. Responses in Table 7 indicate that 63% of the respondents are more likely to express their opinion, and 59% are more likely to advocate for themselves since participating in an Even Start program in Maine.

Table 7
Communication and Social Skills, n=59

Since joining Even Start, I am more likely to . . .	*Percent*
Express my opinions	63%
Advocate for myself	59%
Speak up at a meeting	59%
Attend a community meeting	36%
Write a letter to a public official or representative	36%

Clearly, many respondents believe that their involvement with Even Start has had considerable impact on their educational growth, literacy, and career development. Further, survey results indicate that regarding social, health, and emotional development; many participants feel that their Even Start program has had a significant impact on their lives. Participation with Even Start has helped many participants with institutional issues as well; the sorts of issues (housing, childcare) that, left unresolved, can interfere with literacy development. Table 8 highlights areas where parents feel that they have received assistance interacting with institutions and agencies through the Even Start. Kyle, one of the program educators notes that the Even Start program works with parents:

> ". . . in dealing with child custody issues, legal problems, communicating with lawyers and/or DHS parenting educators and case workers. The program is helping parents take charge of getting their children back, helping the mother get her voice, and to learn to work with the system. Sometimes the parents are dealing with the basics of supervised visits on weekends. The program is also helping parents to read and develop activities to do with their child(ren) when they visit."

Table 8
Survey Responses Regarding Help With Institutional Issues, n=83

Since joining Even Start I have received help with . . .	*Percent*
School visits with teachers and staff	27%
Housing problems*	17%
Department of Human Services	12%
Medical issues	10%
Legal problems	5%
Court visits	5%
Child custody issues	4%

> "I'm the youngest parent here. I listen to what everyone [the other women in the parent support group meeting] says. I don't want to be in abusive relationships. My kids come first. When I need someone to talk to I just call up Terry or Lisa. I'm going to go to college. I know it's going to be hard with two kids." - *Lily, at a parent support group meeting*

There was a significant difference in the way that respondents from different programs responded to the item "Since joining Even Start I have received help with housing problems" (critical value=2.29, F=2.89, p=0.019). Respondents at the urban Even Start program clearly had higher positive responses to this item than respondents at the five rural sites.

Increased Empowerment and Self-esteem

Staff and learners use Equipped for the Future (EFF) standards to set goals and document progress. This approach helps staff and learners to both assess programs as well as to empower learners to take responsibility for programming In showing progress for most-in-need learners, FGTD staff felt that evidence of an increased sense of empowerment and self-esteem were key indicators of growth. Anecdotal evidence from the staff indicate that learners are growing in this area in the following ways:

- *Increased risk taking* - "I see evidence of them [learners] initiating and taking risks . . . in their healthy risk-taking behavior increases." - *Donna, Even Start Educator.*
- *Increased involvement with program planning* - "[learners] offer ideas for the early childhood component." - *Penny, Even Start Educator.*
- *Increased career aspirations* - "I see evidence that [some participants] are seeking out better work opportunities." - *Lisa, Even Start Educator.*

Evidence of increased self-esteem comes from the participants. Before joining Even Start, Myrna, an Even Start mother of four, said, "I never thought I

> "I feel more confident about myself." – *Myrna, Even Start mother*

could drive." Lily, a mother of two, says that since joining Even Start "I am more comfortable around other people than I was before." Participants interviewed and surveyed also indicate that they feel less isolated and have more access to resources than they did before joining Even Start. "I learned about how to get my GED," reports Kelly, the mother of an infant. Myrna points out that "Even Start was the only place [my youngest daughter] could play with other children" before joining a day care program. Ninety-two percent of the survey respondents indicated that they have access to information, and 85% indicated that they have access to resources, that they did not have before participating with Even Start.

Access to Information and Resources

Participants interviewed and surveyed also indicate that they feel less isolated and have more access to resources than they did before joining Even Start. "I learned about how to get my GED," reports Kelly, the mother of an infant. Myrna points out that "Even Start was the only place [my youngest daughter] could play with other children" before joining a day care program. Ninety-two percent of the survey respondents indicated that they have access to information, and 85% indicated that they have access to resources, that they did not have before participating with Even Start.

Another area where parents feel that they have received assistance is interacting with institutions and agencies through the Even Start Links program. Kathy, one of the program educators notes that the Even Start Links program works with parents:

> ". . . in dealing with child custody issues, legal problems, communicating with lawyers and/or DHS parenting educators and case workers. The program is helping parents take charge of getting their children back, helping the mother get her voice, and to learn to work with the system. Sometimes the parents are dealing with the basics of supervised visits on weekends. The program is also helping parents to read and develop activities to do with their child(ren) when they visit."

CHILD LITERACY AND DEVELOPMENT

Evidence of child development impacts through participation in Even Start programs in Maine comes from a number of sources including: learning portfolios organized around EFF standards; case studies of participating families; notes from PET meetings with the child's teacher and parent(s); teachers' logs, intake forms; portfolios; student assessment forms; interviews with Even Start staff; and interviews with participants. In addition, Parents were surveyed to get their perceptions of child literacy and development impacts for their children Responses from program parents regarding perceived effects of their child(ren)'s development while participating in one of Maine's Even Start programs are presented in Table 9. This information gives participant perceptions of changes they have noticed with their children since joining Even Start. Clearly, a majority of these respondents feel that program involvement has had a positive impact on the academic development of their children. In addition, many respondents perceive a positive impact of program involvement on the social development of their children.

Table 9
Survey Responses Regarding Child Development, n=83

Since joining Even Start my child(ren) . . .	*Percent*
Have learned new things	76%
Are getting along better with other children, (n=59)	44%
Talk more	42%
Want to be around other children*	41%
Are more prepared for school	34%
Like school better*	28%
Are healthier	22%

ANOVA tests indicate that for the variables "my children like school better" and "my children want to be around other children" had significantly different responses across the six Even Start programs in Maine. ANOVA tests indicates that these differences are significant at a 90% confidence level (critical value=2.29). For the item "my children like school better" positive responses ranged from 18% to 48%. ANOVA tests indicate these responses are significantly different (critical value=2.29, F=2.63, p=0.03). For the item "want to be around other children" positive survey responses ranged from 18% to 39%. ANOVA test statistics for this variable were: critical value=2.29, F=2.85, p=0.020. It appears that the programs with the lowest level of positive responses to these two items were the programs with more infants than school aged children involved in the program. Survey respondents included comments that illustrate individual impacts such as:

- "My kids learn more things. They share more and say 'Thank you!' and 'Please' more."
- "My son gets along better with others and my son is also above and beyond other children his age".
- "My son enjoys going on family trips and other activities."
- "[Even Start] has helped my son in areas of playing, talking more, and picking up, and learned more things with school."
- "My child is more aware of his environment."
- "It has helped my children know how to get along with me."
- "My child is getting along better with other children although this is still an on-going thing for him."

Program staff at one the Even Start sites completed a thorough analysis of school records for children participating in their program. Findings of this analysis indicate that Even Start children from this site are functioning at or above expected levels in elementary school.

"My boy is learning to share and trying to get along with others." - *Survey Respondent*

Bill and Karen are in their fourth year with one of Maine's Even Start programs. They have three children, Tom (9), Keith (8), and Anita (2). The family was interviewed at an Even Start family dinner. An excerpt from that interview is presented here to illustrate the multiple impacts (child literacy, adult literacy, intergenerational literacy, and parenting) this family attributes to participation in Even Start.

Interviewer: What has participating in Even Start meant for you?

Bill: Tom has excelled at reading. I think that's a direct result of Story Camp [an Even Start activity]. He's a fanatical reader.

Keith: They give you lots of books! Books! I love to read books!

Bill: One of the biggest things for me was Baby Group. I'm not sure how we would have made it without the support. We were frustrated. Our daughter was colicky. Baby Group was right on target.

Karen: I think for me, Even Start helped me go back to work. I got a driver's license, got a job. Got off of AFDC. We became "family of the year."

Bill: Also, Even Start kinda forced us to read to the children. Which, it's become a habit. We'll read wherever we are. Doesn't have to be at bed. Karen is working, so now I stay at home. We switched roles. She's the breadwinner. Anita is having an issue sleeping. When Lisa [Even Start educator] comes it's great. I don't know who gets more out of the activities. Anita is building motor skills. I get to sit back and talk to Lisa. She's a godsend. If I wasn't in Even Start, I don't know. I act like a little child when the school calls. Lisa supports us with the teachers and communicates. I'm sure she's worked above and beyond twenty hours per week.

PARENTING AND INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING IMPACTS

Evidence of parenting and intergenerational impacts as a result of participation in Even Start programs throughout Maine are documented through participant surveys and interviews, learning portfolios organized around EFF standards, case studies of participating families, notes from PET meetings with the child's teacher and parent(s), teachers' logs, educator interviews, intake forms, and program documents. Responses from program parents regarding parenting effects of their participation with one of Maine's Even Start programs are presented in Table 10. Eighty percent of survey respondents indicated that since joining Even Start they are more comfortable visiting their child's school. Significant differences were noted across sites on two of these items "Aware of how I discipline my child(ren)" and "Aware of children and television." During interviews, parents also discussed the impact that participation in Even Start has had on their parenting. Representative comments include:

> "Since joining Even Start I have become a better parent/teacher. I am more aware of myself, and how unique I am as a parent. – *Ted, Even Start father*
>
> "I was a mess at parenting until Even Start helped me. I love learning about how to be a better parent." – *Corinna, Even Start mother*
> "Parenting classes have helped me tremendously." – *Holly, Even Start mother*

"I am able to do things or go places that I could not usually do with my child." – *Salma, Even start mother*

"I am more involved than before." - *Helen, Even Start mother*

"I feel more confident as a parent." - *John, Even Start father*

"The Even Start program taught me how to be a better mother, how to walk away when I'm frustrated. Even Start gave me ideas. I didn't think I could do much with a 15 month-old baby but I learned things so I could interact with her. . . I used to one of those people who didn't care. I look on the brighter side now, I don't always look downhill. . . my self-esteem is up." - *Mary, Even Start mother*

"How has Even Start helped? It's helped me to get to know my daughter more than I used to. She's starting to say words from books. I'm finding out about my daughter's development. She isn't crawling, and she won't drink out of a bottle, just a cup." - *Iris, Even Start mother of 11 month old infant*

"The parenting aspect of Even Start is a definite highlight for me as well as a strong asset in the Even Start program." - *Nancy, Even Start mother*

Table 10
Survey Responses Regarding Parenting, n=83

Since joining Even Start I am more. . .	*Percent*
Comfortable visiting my child(ren)'s school	80%
Aware of reading to my child(ren)	64%
Involved with my child(ren)'s education	57%
Aware of how I discipline my child(ren)*	52%
Aware of child development	47%
Aware of seeing parents as teachers	43%
Likely to spend more time with my family	37%
Aware of children and television*	35%

A few of the Even Start programs in Maine have embraced the Parents as Teachers approach, which uses a research driven curriculum. The Parents as Teachers program includes brain development information that is "very accessible to parents in the form of videos, parent/child activities, and parent handouts," according to Jill, one of the Even Start educators. She says that parents learn about the value of play for development of their child. Jill notes that "parents are almost all interested and usually receptive to the researched information that is presented about parenting." However, she points out that, in addition to a strong curriculum, trust is key to effective parenting education and "relationships need to be established first" between the educators and parents.

Karina, an Even Start mother describes the parenting part of the Even Start program as supportive. During an interview, Karina said "I feel well-rounded and supported. I have no fear that if I'm frustrated with my kids I could call Rene. If I'm at my edge I could call her. I go to parent support meetings, they have child care there, too." Even Start program staff note that parenting techniques have "shown a drastic improvement and families are much more involved [than previously] with community and family events."

> "Many of our families have realized the importance of becoming a family unit. They are teaching their children values, eating dinner together, attending PACT time, and taking time to spend quality time with their children as a family. Providing a positive learning environment to families has resulted in parents understanding the importance of becoming their children's first teachers and to role model the importance of education to their children." – *Mary, Even Start Educator*

SUMMARY

There is considerable evidence that Even Start programs in Maine are having positive effects for participating families. Extensive documentation of program activities and participant development is compiled at each site. Programs use many methods of collecting information inclduing: learning logs, program perotfolios, databases, attenedance recoreds, and daily documentation forms, to name a few. Documentation is complex and extensive, but focuses more on adult impoacts and program activities than on intergenerational learning and child development. Programs should implement more standardized and pre-post testing of adults and children. Working more closely with school staff and using childhood developmental tests are some ways of further documenting impacts for families.

The adult education and literacy componant of all the Even Start programs in Maine include opportunities for life skills, parenting skills, and academic development. However, many personal and social issues become barriers for participants to successfully attain educational and career goals. However, most (76%) of adults surveyed report that they are learning things they think are important. Fifty-one percent report improved reading and writing skills, and 37% report improved math skills as a result of Even Start program participation.

In addition to skills development, there is evidence that Even Start program participants in Maine improved their mental and emotional health and social skills. Thirty-one percent of survey respondents indicate that program participation hads helped them with stress management. Seventy percent report they have made new friends, and 70% feel better about themselves since participation in Even Start. Survey respondents report increased communication skills, increased sense of empowerment and self-esteem. Nearly all (80%) of the respondents indicated that they have access to information and resources that they did not have before participating in their Even Start program.

There is evidence, primarily anecdotal, of impacts on child litearcy and development for Even Start program particiants. Seventy-six percent of survey respondents report that their children have learned new things since participating in Even Start, 44% report that their children are getting along better with other childre, and 34% believe their children are more prepared for school. One program analyzed school data and found that their Even Start children were performaing at or above satisfactory levels in in their elementary school. More data of this sort should be collected by Even Start programs in Maine.

There is evidence, again, primarily anectotal, that Even Start participation has a positive effect on parenting skills and intergenerational learning. Kyle, an Even Start educator notes that:

> ". . . parents are becoming much more involved in their children's lives, and really, for the first time, being a real positive influence and role model, helping their child in difficult times, being more proactive in terms of education, making appointments with us, going into school and seeing teachers and other school personnel."

Eighty percent of survey respondents indicate that they are more comfortable visiting their childrens' school, 57% are more involved in their childrens' education, and 43% are more aware of seeing parents as teachers. As with child development/literacy impacts, it is advised that Even Start programs in Maine collect more concrete data regarding parenting and intergenerational literacy impacts. Writing case studies is one way to do this. Another way would be to collect information from other agencies (Head Start, schools, ASPIRE, WIC, for example) who work with these families to learn how these people may see change in parenting skills as a result of Even Start participation. The National Center for Family Literacy's (1996) publication *Outcomes and Measures in Family Literacy Programs* includes a comprehensive overview of measures, tests, and inventories available of adult learner outcomes, parent and parent-child interaction outcomes, and preschool child outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This statewide evaluation of Maine Even Start programs found that all Maine Even Start programs offer a combination of home-based and center-based services for the families they serve. Questions that guided this evaluation were: How are Even Start programs implemented in the State of Maine? And What are the effects of participation in Even Start programs for families? This evaluation finds evidence that program implementation and development is successful and integrates the components of family literacy across all six Even Start programs evaluated in Maine.

PROGRAM EFFICACY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Program implementation and service delivery – Program implementation and service delivery of Maine Even Start programs was found to be successful and responsive to the target audience, most-in-need families. Even Start programs in Maine are at different stages in their program cycles, and are providing activities appropriate to their programs' stage of development. For example, the first year program is focusing on recruitment, while the seventh year program is focusing on sustainability. Even Start programs in Maine should continue to:

- Keep thorough and comprehensive records of program implementation, development, and successes,
- Aggressively seek funding to assure access to sufficient financial and human resources for continuation,
- Recognize and address characteristics of target audience and address transportation needs and retention for rural, most-in-need families to enable access to site-based activities,
- Recognize and work with the tension between home-based and site-based programming, those programs planning to transition to more site-based programming may negatively impact participation of some most-in-need families in areas of Maine which are very rural and are physically isolated from the town center,
- Address issues of adequate space, which was noted by some staff as a barrier to successful implementation,
- Address the issue at some sites of less than adequate staff hours. Administrative and educational staff at a number of Even Start sites expressed concern about not having enough time to provide all the services Even Start programs offer as well as complete necessary paperwork and documentation. These programs could study how staff time is spent, for example have staff record how many hours they spend on different types of activities. In addition, Even Start programs in Maine may consider modifying their budget to include more staff hours for administrators and teachers,
- Address the need for leadership training for participants to become more fully involved in program development, and
- Address the needs of English as a Second Language and bilingual populations, which are characteristics of communities in at least two Even Start programs in the state of Maine.

Incorporating Equipped for the Future (EFF) and continuous improvement -All six Even Start programs evaluated in Maine incorporate EFF standards and framework into their curricula. It is also evident that each Even Start program incorporates a continuous improvement approach to program planning and development. In addition to reflective and purposeful planning, Even Start programs in Maine engage in formative evaluation activities and support staff development. An active Even Start Family Literacy Task Force and regular training and development opportunities provided by the Maine State Department of Education and the Center for Adult Learning and Literacy also contribute support for Even Start administrators and educators. Even Start programs in Maine should continue to:

- incorporate the EFF framework and standards and individualized approach to educational program, which appears to have positive impacts for participants; and
- participate in staff development opportunities regarding EFF.

Collaborations - Successful and meaningful collaboration is a critical factor for the success of most of these Even Start programs. Even Start programs in Maine collaborate with a wide variety of agencies and businesses in their communities. All six Maine Even Start programs are aware of the barriers to participation and successful program implementation, and are actively engaged in facing these challenges. Even Start programs in Maine should continue to:

- develop and maintain meaningful collaborations with local area agencies;
- address staff concerns about the efficacy of their collaborations with some institutions;
- address staff concerns about duplication and intensity of services. Documentation of incidences of duplication and other consequences of collaborations with other agencies (including benefits for those agencies) would be useful; and
- market themselves and educate other community agencies about family literacy, EFF, and Even Start's goals. In addition to marketing the program to prospective participants and collaborative agencies, more aggressive marketing efforts aimed specifically at schools and agencies that Even Start programs could help to increase referrals. For example, it may be beneficial to for Even Start programs in Maine to make presentations at school faculty meetings or agency board meetings.

Participant Satisfaction - There is very strong evidence of participant satisfaction with all six Even Start programs in Maine. Families involved in the program are very satisfied with services, but many expressed the desire for more time and for the program to be available to a larger clientele. Ideally, the program would expand. Realistically, resources would be a challenge. These programs focus on empowering families. For example, at least three programs regularly incorporate participant designed and facilitated activities into their program. Two programs employ previous participants. The six Maine Even Start programs provide safe learning environments for participants. Even Start participants describe the program as supportive, friendly and safe. Even Start Programs in Maine should continue to:

- Address rural issues, which include isolation and transportation problems for participants,
- Continue to build a safe learning communities and move toward empowering families as co-facilitators of Even Start programs, and
- Continue offering a well-rounded, highly individualized, supportive and nurturing educational program that meets the needs of a wide range of families.

EFFECTS OF EVEN START PARTICIPATION FOR FAMILIES

Documenting effects for Even Start families - There is considerable evidence that Even Start programs in Maine are having positive effects for participating families. Extensive documentation of program activities and participant development is compiled at each site. Documentation focuses more on adult impacts and program activities than on intergenerational learning and child development. Programs should implement more standardized and pre-post testing of adults and children. Working more closely with school staff and using childhood developmental tests are some ways of further documenting impacts for families. Further, collaborators would like to see better accountability of Even Start and more recognition of student success. Programs are advised to share evaluation reports with collaborators, and to publicize program successes. Documenting impacts is always a challenge with complex programs such as Even Start. All Even Start programs in Maine documents achievements and successes, however, more concrete documentation of impacts should be collected. Even Start programs in Maine should:

- Continue to compile documentation of success and impacts for participant families, and
- Consider using additional assessments such as those described in the National Center for Family Literacy's publication *Outcomes and Measures in Family Literacy Programs.*

Positive adult literacy and development effects - The adult education and literacy componant of all the Even Start programs in Maine include opportunities for life skills, parenting skills, and academic development. However, many personal and social issues become barriers for participants to successfully attain educaiton andcareer goals. Most (76%) of adults surveyed report that they are learning things they think are important. Fifty-one percent report improved reading and writing skills, and 37% report improved math skills as a result of Even Start program participation.

In addition to skills development, there is evidence that Even Start program participants in Maine improved their mental and emotional health, and social skills. Thirty-one percent of survey respondents indicate that program participation has helped them with stress management. Seventy percent report they have made new friends, and 70% feel better about themselves since participation in Even Start. Survey respondents report increased communication skills, sense of empowerment, and self-esteem. Nearly all (80%) of the respondents indicated that they have access to information and resources that they did not have before participating in their Even Start program. Even Start programs in Maine should:

- Collect case studies of adults, written by themselves or by teachers, which would help to document program impacts in adult literacy and development,

- Considering gathering data from external sources (e.g. school teachers, case-workers) to document impacts of program participation for families, and
- Consider using measures of adult learner outcomes such as the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) , Wide Range Achievement Test-3 (WRAT 3) or other measures of adult outcomes as described in *Outcomes and Measures in Family Literacy Programs.*

Positive early childhood development impacts - There is evidence, primarily anecdotal, of impacts on child literacy and development for Even Start program particiants. Seventy-six percent of survey respondents report that their children have learned new things since participating in Even Start, 44% report that their children are getting along better with other childre, and 34% believe their children are more prepared for school. One program analyzed school data and found that their Even Start children were performaing at or above satisfactory levels in in their elementary school. More data of this sort should be collected by Even Start programs in Maine. Even Start programs in Maine should:

- Consider using measures of preschool child outcomes such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Revised (PPVT-R), the Preschool Inventory (PSI), or other measures of adult outcomes as described in *Outcomes and Measures in Family Literacy Programs,* and
- Collaborate more closely with schools, Head Start programs, and organizations such as CDS to monitor child development and progress.

Positive parenting skills impacts - There is evidence, again, primarily anectotal, that Even Start participation has a positive effect on parenting skills. Eighty percent of survey respondents indicate that they are more comfortable visiting their childrens' school, 57% are more involved in their child's education, and 43% are more aware of seeing parents as teachers. As with child development/literacy impacts, it is advised that Even Start programs in Maine collect more concrete data regarding parenting and intergenerational literacy impacts. Writing case studies is one way to do this. Another way would be to collect information from other agencies (Head Start, schools, ASPIRE, WIC, for example) who work with these families to learn how these people may see change in parenting skills as a result of Even Start participation. Even Start programs in Maine should:

- Continue thorough documentation of both family and program development, challenges, and successes,
- Considering gathering data from external sources (e.g. school teachers, case-workers) to document impacts of program participation for families,
- Collaborate more closely with schools to monitor child development and progress, and
- Consider using measures of parent and parent-child interaction outcomes such as the Self-Esteem Scale (SS), Familia Inventory, and other measures as described in *Outcomes and Measures in Family Literacy Programs.*

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APPENDIX A
MAINE STATE EVEN START PROGRAMS

Program	Total Staff	Active Families	School District(s)
Dover-Foxcroft Even Start Program	4 (2 administrators, 2 instructors)	15	MSAD #41 & MSAD #68
Even Start Links, Farmington	3 (1 administrator, 2 instructors)	15	MSAD #9 and MSAD #58
Belfast ELF Program	3 (1 administrator, 2 instructors)	10-15	SAD #24
Portland West Even Start	4 (1 administrator, 3 teachers)	20-25	Reiche School District, Portland
CHIPPY Even Start, Fort Kent	4 (1 administrator, 3 educators)	25	MSAD #27
Families Growing Together Downeast, East Sullivan	4 (1 administrator, 3 educators)	13	Sumner

APPENDIX B
Maine Even Start Family Literacy Program Participants

The purpose of this section of the evaluation report is to introduce the reader to some of the eight-three participants who contributed to this evaluation report (through surveys and through interviews). One Even Start administrator describes the family he works with this way:

> "For some families, Even Start is life changing, absolutely life changing. They are learning to read, getting the GED, getting counseling support and help through crises, getting tremendous early childhood intervention, they are getting employment through us, we are able to give them their ASPIRE hours. There are social involvements that they've never had in the past, dealing with some of the isolation that some of our families do, they're making friends for the first time. We're putting them in touch with key people in the community to met their needs. For other families, we're a pain, because we don't give up, we don't throw in the towel. The point is, it is really different with each family. [Even Start participation] can be life-changing, life-saving." - *Terry, Even Start Administrator*

MYRNA

I just heard about the Even Start program. Terry [administrator], he seemed nice, up front, and *honest.* I met Terry and Nancy [Even Start educator]. They've all been wonderful, supportive, understanding. You could cry on their shoulders.

I've been battered by two men. I'm a single mom. I have only three at home, my daughter is in foster care. I'm from [another town], the community is great here compared to [there]. I'm close to getting my GED. In April, I took the pre-GED and I passed. I never knew I could do it. Now I'm job shadowing. I made food. I felt important. I felt I was *real* and I was important. I go back this Friday and see if I can work on the pizza. I felt important, made pizzas, ran the cash register. I learned so much. I learned a lot in one day. I worked from 9 to 3. I felt so good about myself and self-image. The people I worked with, they all liked me. They enjoyed working with me! I want to learn more skills.

Nancy, she comes to my house every Monday. She reads to Brian. It is so awesome. Brian won't start his day 'til he's had his book. Even Start has helped me with daycare. I've learned so much. Terry is coming to the PET meeting for my fifth grader. My 17-year old son is high honors. Straight. I feel I've come a long ways in Even Start. I know I did something right." – *Excerpts from interview with Myrna, Even Start Parent*

JENNIE

The [Even Start] program helped me in so many ways. It inspired me to be a better person. I learned a lot through the teachers. A great program! I hope they never stop teaching people. It has inspired me, helped my dreams come true. They will come true. I plan to go to college and be a teacher. . . They never gave up on me here. My husband has been noticing a difference, he knows now I'm not going to give up on my dream. - *Excerpts from interview with Jennie, Even Start program participant since 1997.*

AMY

Amy joined FGTD in March, 1998. At that time her children were 5 and 7 years old. Both boys have special needs and receive services. Amy is fiercely protective of her children. Roy has autism, and Kyle has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, ODD, and ADHD. A major accomplishment on Amy's part is that she can now advocate and influence for her children in ways that allow her to be heard. - *Excerpt from case study by Even Start Educator.*

CELESTE

I was out of the house at thirteen. I [was] in a relationship with my husband for five years. I'm now divorced. I have four children. Even Start pushed me in the right way. [My] husband was abusive. I was majorly depressed for years. They helped me be assertive, build my self-esteem. They really picked me up from the gutter and helped me wipe the slime off my face. It helped me realize I didn't need this. It's a safe program. We meet every Tuesday, it's a lunch and support group. I'm psyched. It's life change. I feel like I've been falling through the cracks for years. Even Start taught me not to be afraid of success, made me realize that I was afraid of success. It's a lot more than just a literacy program. – *Excerpt from interview with Celeste, mother of four, Even Start participant for three years*

MARY

I'm twenty years old. I grew up in this area of Maine and I have a fifteen-month-old baby, Tina. I heard about Even Start through Becky [Even Start educator], in adult education. I go to school here, working on an elective for my diploma. I need a diploma to make her [Tina's] life better. That's what I don't like, when they look down on you. I think that a mother like me, and the other mothers here, they should give us more credit.

I was supposed to come and work on my schoolwork every day, but Tina got sick, I missed a lot of school. I really want to get my credits. I'm working hard. I really want a job. It's so frustrating. But they see you have no job history and a fifteen-month-old baby, and you can't get a job. I got off of state [assistance]. But my daughter's father only brings home $170 bucks a week.

The parenting class, I need it, I'm learning about Tina's social development. It also teaches me how to be a better mother. Like, how to walk away when I get frustrated. And I get frustrated. Her father, he works about 40 miles away. He gets home at 8:00 p.m. My mother babysits my daughter while I'm in class. Thank God for mothers.

Becky comes to my house. We color with Tina. We do hands-on projects. It gives me ideas. I didn't think I could do much with a fifteen-month-old baby, I learned things so I can interact with her more. The good thing about Even Start is we all get one-on-one time and we all work together. It has also calmed me down quite a bit.

I like the parenting group. You get to talk to other mothers. They're there for you, other mothers and the Even Start teachers. And it gives me a little break from Tina. I like Even Start. It's a good program. We're growing as learners. But I wish they had more funding. They do help a lot, but it's not enough help for all the people who are trying to make it and who need jobs. *Excerpts from an interview with Mary, Dover-Foxcroft Even Start Participant*

LISA

Lisa lost both of her children to the state soon after she enrolled in the Even Start Links program. She was very angry, and, according to Even Start staff, she hated DHS and the family her children went to. Lisa gave a talk at a conference presented by the Even Start Links program and Family Development in March, 2000. She was asked what programs influenced her the most. She said Even Start. Lisa joined Even Start "because I wanted to get a better education and learn a better way to take care of my children." At the conference, she was asked What do you do in Even Start? She replied reading and computer. Program staff were struck by her response, because the teachers spent so much time with her preparing for court and DHS meetings. But she "had in her mind that there was a real educational component as well as the support from Even Start." According to an Even Start teacher, "she used to hate the foster mom, and now she wants her to continue seeing her children after she gets them back." Lisa says "I think it's a good idea having these programs, like Even Start. There should be more program like this. There are more people who need this. Before [Even Start] I never would have asked for help. I've learned ways of asking for help." - *Compiled from interviews with Even Start staff and Lisa*

MAX

Max is always willing to discuss parenting issues and it is clear he tries his best. His son is his first priority. . . Max came to our Even Start program in March of 1998 to work on his reading. He was tired of not being able to read. He was worried that with his son going into school, he might not be able to read as well as his son before too long. He is a perfect match for Even Start because he wants his son's school experience to be better than his own was. Max is a single father in his mid thirties. He lives with his son and his parents. He works at the local sardine canning factory. He is a beginning reader. . . . Some memorable accomplishments: Max has begun writing sentences on his own for homework, a daunting task for him since spelling has always been such a challenge. He said he never did that in school, write sentences on his own. He is consciously practicing increasing his reading speed and there has been a noticeable improvement with elementary level materials. He has submitted two short pieces to our newsletter which he typed on the computer. He asked me to attend a PET for his son because he wanted to be able to have an ally there with him whom he could debrief afterwards. He writes notes to the school now when he needs to communicate with them. He recently got his license to operate a forklift at work. - *Excerpts of case study by Even Start educator*

NINA

Nina joined the Even Start program in April, 1996. Her son, Mike, was 8 months old. Nina's initial long-term goal was to complete her high school diploma and gain knowledge of early childhood development and parenting; although she has made good progress these past 4 years, Nina has had several stops and starts requiring that she put the program "on hold" for several reasons. Nina participated in the Health Action Team: a group of students under the direction of a nurse practitioner who studied health issues and occasionally presented health-related workshops to the staff and students of the Adult Learning Center. This group also made a presentation on patient concerns to a local clinic. Nina has also participated in a live call-in interview on a local community radio station. - *Excerpt from case study Even Start educator*

KAREN AND BILL

Karen and Bill have been with Even Start for a long time. At this point they are pretty high functioning, they have a wedding coming up. Karen is holding a steady job. She's gone from not working and having minimal skills to holding a job in the workforce. She's battled depression and has a handle on that. She has worked really hard with the schools, there was a big fear at first with they schools. They both had really bad experiences with schools growing up. They've really come a long way. The high-risk piece at this point is that it is just about a year that Bill has been clean. He's a heroin addict. So they really struggle with that. If he makes it through the next month it will be a first for him [to be clean for a year]. *Excerpt from case study by Even Start educator*

KELLY

Kelly, who is 27, has been in the program a long time, this is her third full year. So, in some ways, she is not high risk. But she lives a high risk life style. Well, she has Tina, who is 2 ½ with her, but she has three other children that she's lost. This is the longest that she has had a child. She has stable housing at this point. She struggles with depression and substance abuse and a real sex addiction. We find that she bounces from man to man, the men she's involved with have a tremendous amount of power over how her life goes. She has a hard time doing any kind of adult education goals. She has achieved a few early childhood goals. She interacts most of the time with me and Tina. Tina was born when Angie was in prison for drug trafficking. She got her GED in prison. She's come a long way, but her day to day life is still very unstable. I think Kelly sees that she's come a long way. *Excerpt from case study by Even Start educator*

LYNE

Lyne is 23 years old and was married at age fourteen. She has three children, and is expecting her fourth. With the support of the Even Start Links program, she just finished her GED this year. She and her family live in a very isolated area. According to one Even Start educator, when she was interviewed in her home, a very small trailer, "There was just no room. The living conditions were really pretty bad. At one point she allowed volunteers to come in and pull junk out of the house. Now the trailer is clean." Lyne now clears the table when she's expecting teacher and has a much greater awareness of her home.. Getting her GED helped her self-esteem and she has started talking about career goals. - *Compiled from interviews with Even Start staff and Lyne*

JOCELYNE AND ROCHELLE

Jocelyn and Rochelle are two single mothers in the Even Start Links program who are preparing for college. They both have young children. With Even Start Link's assistance, they were able to enroll their children in Head Start, which freed them up to study for school. They attended the Family Literacy Conference in Louisville, Kentucky this year. Jocelyn and Rochelle also met the First Lady of Maine, at Blaine House, and they were interviewed by newspaper and the television about their experiences with family literacy. Rochelle has three children, two who live with her full time and the other lives in foster care. She is studying biology right now with Jill, an Even Start Links program adult educator. She also took algebra and the other classes she needed to complete her GED with help from Even Start. She recently found out she was accepted to nursing school. She is also working with Jill on her resume. One of Rochelle's favorite activities at Even Start, besides attending the conference in Louisville, is the Families for Peace dinner that

they have each month. Rochelle says that "Even Start has been a good program for me. When I started, I just thought I'd get algebra. I got much more than algebra. I got a family, friendship, support and a lot of other good things." - *Compiled from interviews with Even Start staff and Rochelle*

EVELYN

Dear Lynette [Even Start administrator],

For months I've been thinking about writing this letter. I just hope I can come up with the right words to express all that I want to say about the Even Start program and the devoted women who faithfully come to my home every week to work with my family.

First of all, I want to say that I'm so very grateful and blessed to be a part of this program. Like other moms, and as a divorced and re-married woman, life has hit me with many complex parenting problems. If it wasn't for the support of Robin (the former adult educator), Lisa, and Rene, I seriously don't know if I could have gotten through some of the tough times I've had in the last year and a half. I sincerely thank God for using them to help me by giving advice from what they've learned through their experiences and by upholding me so I could endure the trying times. You have some very caring, thoughtful and unselfish women that are so willing to go the extra mile to help in any situation.

I would now like to take a few minutes to say a few words about Lisa. Although I'm still getting to know her, I know enough to say that she's a real good listener and does what she can to aid me in knowing how to deal with my seven year old son. . . On two different occasions, she was thoughtful and on the ball enough to remember me while reading the newspaper on her own time. It's impressive to me that she'd think of me and keep the articles she'd seen on [subjects of concern to me] so I could read them. . .

Now, a few things about Rene. Boy, does she ever have a lot of knowledge about parenting! She, too, has the ability to really listen and does everything she can to understand. As a person who has no family around and who knows few people, I depend on and look up to her so much. Rene also goes the extra mile to get extra material that is helpful. . . In addition, Rene's way of just simply asking questions, listening, understanding, giving lots of hints to guide and working one-on-one with each of us.

In closing, being involved in this program has taught and made me aware of many things. Through trial and error, my family has tried many ways to solve conflicts. I have learned how important being firm, without anger, and consistency are as a parent. These are two skills I will be continuing to work on. . . Recognizing that children have and need to be allowed to express their feelings aids in parenting also. So thank you Lynette, Rene, and Lisa from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to be a part of Even Start Links.

I recommend it to any family that has a real desire to improve their education and family relationships. As long as they are willing to put forth an effort and do their part, I would guarantee they'd get the support and guidance needed to get successful results.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Evelyn Sayles
(Mom of Ryan, 7 years old and Connor, 8 months old) *Excerpts from a letter written by an Even Start participant to an Even Start administrator. Names have been changed for confidentiality.*

APPENDIX C
EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Activity	Participants	Dates
Site Visits including evaluation meetings with staff n=13	Program Staff and Evaluation Team (Desi Larson, and Lisa Levinson)	November 1999 May 2000
Maine Statewide Family Literacy Quality Indicator Development, n=2	Program Staff and Evaluation Team	October 1999 March 2000
Participant Survey Development	Program Staff and Evaluation Team	February - March 2000
Evaluation Team Meetings n=12	Evaluation Team: Veronica Delcourt-Branch, Desi Larson, and Lisa Levinson	October 1999 - May 2000
Participant Survey n=83	Program Learners	April - May 2000
Structured interview (using electronic mail and telephone follow-up), n=23	Program administrative and educational staff	April – August 2000
Semi-structured interview, n=10	Adult learners	May 2000
Structured interview and survey, n=9	Key informants from collaborating agencies	May 2000
Observation	Early Childhood Education Program; Voter Activity; Family Resource Center	November 1999
Observation	Parent Action Group Meeting; New Books, New Readers program; Even Start Weekly Staff Meeting	November 1999
Document Review	FY 2000 program documents including: 1) Even Start Benchmarks of Success; 2) Program forms (feedback, evaluation, checklists, learner contracts, etc); 3) Program planning framework using EFF standards; 4) minutes from Family Action Group meetings; 5) program brochures; 6) student assessment forms; 7) examples of student work; 8) Adult Education Course Catalogues; 9) Literacy Peer Review Report; 10) Even Start participant publications; 11) minutes from staff meetings; 12) notes from retreats; 13) case studies of learner; 14) educator and program logs	January – August 2000

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Thank you for your time!

For the following questions, please CHECK ALL BOXES THAT APPLY to you.

1. Since joining Even Start, my child(ren):

- ☐ have learned new things
- ☐ like school better
- ☐ want to be around other children
- ☐ talk more
- ☐ are healthier
- ☐ more prepared for school
- ☐ getting along better with other children

Comments:_____

_____

_____

2. Since joining Even Start, I am more aware of:

- ☐ reading to my child(ren)
- ☐ ways my children handle their emotions
- ☐ ways my children grow
- ☐ ways my children learn
- ☐ behavior management/parenting skills
- ☐ the special needs of my child
- ☐ the role of parents as teachers
- ☐ my child's health
- ☐ how I discipline my child(ren)
- ☐ children and television
- ☐ the value of playing with my child

Comments:_____

_____

_____

3. Since joining Even Start I have:

- ☐ learned things that *I* think are important
- ☐ received training in First Aid
- ☐ received CPR training/certification
- ☐ improved math skills
- ☐ improved reading/writing skills

Comments:_____

_____

4. Since joining Even Start I have:

- ☐ enrolled in a vocational training course
- ☐ completed a vocational training course
- ☐ enrolled in a college course
- ☐ completed a college course
- ☐ attend adult education classes
- ☐ received adult diploma credits
- ☐ worked on the GED
- ☐ received the GED
- ☐ enrolled in a technical training course
- ☐ received a driver's license
- ☐ improved computer skills
- ☐ developing career goals

Comments:_____

5. Since joining Even Start, I:

- ☐ have made new friends
- ☐ feel better about myself
- ☐ handle anger better than before
- ☐ exercise more
- ☐ quit or cut down smoking
- ☐ quit or cut down drinking

Comments:_____

_____

_____

PLEASE COMPLETE NEXT PAGE ➡

6. The Even Start program has helped me with:

- ☐ job skills
- ☐ finding a job
- ☐ legal problems/meet with lawyers
- ☐ child custody
- ☐ doctor/hospital visits/dental
- ☐ court visits
- ☐ school visits with teachers
- ☐ school visits other school staff
- ☐ DHS, if so, which program?
  - ☐ TANF
  - ☐ Food Stamps
  - ☐ Medicare
  - ☐ Other
- ☐ family planning
- ☐ depression/emotional issues
- ☐ stress management
- ☐ housing problems

Comments:_____

_____

7. Since joining Even Start, I:

- ☐ spend more time with my family
- ☐ am more involved with my child(ren)'s education
- ☐ avoid unhealthy relationships
- ☐ have set goals for myself
- ☐ get along better with others

Comments:_____

_____

8. Since joining Even Start, I have access to information I didn't have before:

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure/neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

9. Since joining the Even Start program, I have access to resources I didn't have before:

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure/neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

10. Because of Even Start, I am more comfortable visiting my child's school:

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure/neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

11. I have learned ideas (or skills) that help me parent my children:

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure/neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

12. Since joining Even Start, I am more likely to:

- ☐ advocate for my child(ren)
- ☐ advocate for myself
- ☐ participate in a community meeting
- ☐ express my opinions
- ☐ write a letter to the newspaper, or community and/or state leaders
- ☐ speak up for myself more often

Comments:_____

_____

_____

13. In your opinion, what are the best things about Even Start?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

PLEASE COMPLETE NEXT PAGE ➡

14. In your opinion, what would improve Even Start?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please help us by providing the following information. For each question, CIRCLE ONLY ONE, or fill blank:

15. I am: ☐ Male ☐ Female

16. I have_____(how many) children

AGES_____

17. I have been in Even Start:
- ☐ Less than 6months
- ☐ less than one year
- ☐ one to two years
- ☐ three years or more

18. I own an automobile:
☐ yes ☐ no

19. I have access to transportation:
☐ yes ☐ no

20. I have a drivers' license:
☐ yes ☐ no

21. I depend on others for transportation:
☐ yes ☐ no

Would you be willing to talk more about Even Start over the phone? If so, please give your name and telephone number (this information will be kept confidential).

Yes, you may phone me to talk more about Even Start:

_____
Name

_____
Phone Number

Thank you very much for your time! Your responses will help this Even Start Program learn more about what it can do to respond to your needs.

Thanks again!

APPENDIX D
DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

SAMPLE EVEN START PROGRAM INTERVIEW GUIDE:

Semi-structured, face-to-face, open-ended

DATE: SITE: INTERVIEWER:

RESPONDENT CODE:

RESPONDENT: male female

LENGTH, INTENSITY AND TYPE OF PROGRAM INVOLVEMENT:

This interview is being conducted as part of an evaluation project that seeks to understand this Even Start Family Literacy Program and its impact. You have received a consent form to sign, which indicates your consent to this interview. Your participation is voluntary, and your anonymity will be protected.

1. What kinds of impacts has this program had on the participating families? (describe and examples)
   a. What are they?
   b. Why?
   c. What are program barriers for families?
   d. Are families meeting their goals?
   e. Is the program in touch with other services (referrals)?
   f. What sorts of barriers do families face?
   g. What sorts of barriers has the program faced in implementation?

2. What are the program's collaborations? (describe and examples)
   a. Combining services?
   b. Cross trainings?
   c. Intensity vs. numbers?

3. Thanks, you've been very helpful. Do you have any other thoughts or feelings you might like to share to help me understand your reactions to this program and how it has affected you? Anything else you'd like to add?

APPENDIX E
MAINE EVEN START PROGRAM EVALUATION QUESTIONS

DOVER FOXCROFT

What does implementation look like? Recruitment? Staff development?
Who are the program participants? Description, Economic level, Impacts

SUMNER FAMILIES GROWING TOGETHER DOWNEAST

How do we prepare for life after Even Start? What steps are we taking?
How do we show progress for most-in-need learners?
How do we provide structure for families so they can co-manage the program?

FARMINGTON EVEN START LINKS

What kinds of impacts has this program had on the participating families?
What are the program's collaborations?

CHIPPY, FT. KENT

How does CHIPPY impact families?
How does CHIPPY empower families toward self-sufficiency?
How does CHIPPY enhance family focused skills, attitudes, and functioning?
How does CHIPPY accomplish transference of abilities, behaviors, skills and attitudes using the Equipped for the Future (EFF) framework (e.g. family, worker, community member)?

PORTLAND WEST EVEN START

What kinds of effects has this program had on the participating families?
What types of collaborations is the program involved in?
What are the impacts of the program's collaborations?

BELFAST ELF EVEN START PROGRAM

How have program changes (staff turn over and moves) impacted program delivery?
What is the impact for families of participation in the ELF Even Start Program?
How can we further incorporate EFF into our programming?
How effective and efficient is our current record keeping?

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